

THE WORK SESSION OF THE FORTIETH COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF BERKLEY, MICHIGAN WAS CALLED TO ORDER AT 5:00 PM ON WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 18, 2024 IN COUNCIL CHAMBERS BY MAYOR DEAN

PRESENT: Councilmember Steve Baker
Councilmember Clarence Black (arrived at 5:05 PM)
Councilmember Dennis Hennen
Councilmember Gregory Patterson
Councilmember Jessica Vilani
Mayor Bridget Dean

ABSENT: Mayor Pro Tem Ross Gavin

OTHER STAFF PRESENT:

City Manager Crystal VanVleck
City Clerk Victoria Mitchell
Deputy City Manager of Public Services Shawn Young
Public Safety Director Matt Koehn
Community Development Director Kristen Kapelanski
Communications Director Caitlin Flora
Interim Parks and Recreation Director Dan McMinn
Library Director Matt Church
Facilities Manager Alex Brown
Chief Innovation Officer Stan Lisica
Adam Wozniak, Superintendent of Public Works

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Councilmember Patterson moved to approve the Agenda
Seconded by Councilmember Vilani
Ayes: Hennen, Patterson, Vilani, Baker and Dean
Nays: None
Absent: Black and Gavin
Motion Approved.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

REGULAR AGENDA

DISCUSSION: City Council Discussion of Strategic Alignment.

City Manager Crystal VanVleck opened the discussion regarding the City of Berkley Draft Strategic Two-Year Framework.

Ms. VanVleck introduced Management Consultant and former Interim City Manager Nate Geinzer who would be leading the discussion.

Mr. Geinzer reviewed the agenda for the evening.

Mr. Geinzer discussed the following:

Governance/Meeting Best Practices

Roles: Council vs. Staff – two very different roles.

Mr. Geinzer discussed top areas where conflict arises.

Mr. Geinzer discussed Council and Staff work flight analogy.

Mr. Geinzer stated Council is elected for purpose and vision while staff is for day-to-day operations. He said it is a sliding continuum in the middle and both should work together.

Mr. Geinzer reviewed the Profile of Effective Council/Staff Communications/Relations I:

- Remember city staff has many demands on their time
- Clearly communicate to Staff what the Council needs in order to make well-informed decisions
- Come to meetings having reviewed the materials prepared by Staff
 - #1 key to efficient and effective meetings
- To help keep staff focused and productive, requests for information from city council members should be directed to the city manager, if possible, submit questions prior to meetings
 - #2 key to efficient and effective meetings
- If you disagree with a staff recommendation, state specific reasons
- Do not assume ... default should be benefit of the doubt
- Treat staff with respect
- Compliment staff when and where appropriate

Mr. Geinzer reviewed Conducting Meetings – Role of the Chair:

- Maintain order throughout the meeting
- Enforce meeting procedures
- Ensure that courtesy is maintained, and speakers are not interrupted
- Ensure that public input is heard, and direct which comments/questions should be addressed by the appropriate party (usually Staff) as necessary for on the spot or future follow up
 - Should not devolve into a back and forth

Mr. Geinzer reviewed Conducting Meetings – Robert's Rules

- Guidance not law
- Cheat Sheet

10 Tips for Effective Meetings

Mr. Geinzer reviewed:

- Preparation and Planning
 - All meetings must be in compliance with the OMA
 - Set clear objectives and agendas well in advance of the meeting
 - Agenda review process
 - Ensure that all board members receive the agenda, supporting materials, and relevant documents with enough time to review them thoroughly
 - Invests necessary time each month including meeting preparation in advance, meetings, and follow-up work as needed.
- Time Management
 - Start and end meetings on time to respect everyone's schedules
 - Average meeting should not have to be longer than 60-90 minutes
 - Business should be conducted according to adopted bylaws or rules of procedure
 - Allocate appropriate time for each agenda item and enforce time limits for discussions to prevent tangents and ensure productivity

- Every vote does not have to be unanimous
- Facilitated Discussions
 - Encourage active participation from all board members by facilitating open discussions and inviting diverse perspectives
 - Balance staff analysis, board deliberations, and strategic framework
 - Be mindful of others' time
- Decision Making Process
 - Establish clear decision-making protocols to ensure that decisions are made in a timely manner and with consequences whenever possible.
 - Provide adequate information and allow for thorough deliberation before making significant decisions
 - Work sessions

A discussion took place regarding holding work sessions and communicating to residents about work session topics/discussions. All work sessions are open to the public.

- Accountability and Follow-up
 - Assign action items and responsibilities at the end of each meeting, with clear deadlines and expectations
 - Regularly track progress on action items and follow up on outstanding tasks at subsequent meetings
 - Quarterly report
- Transparency and Communication
 - Foster an environment of transparency by openly sharing information and updates with board members
 - Avoid side conversations
 - Communicate effectively between meetings to address urgent matters and keep all stakeholders informed
- Strategic Focus
 - Keep discussions aligned with the organization's mission, vision, and strategic priorities
 - Prioritize agenda items that are crucial to the organization's long-term success and sustainability
 - Stay focused on items that align with strategic framework
 - Stay out of the weeds
- Board Development and Training
 - Invest in board development and training programs to ensure that all members understand their roles, responsibilities, and best practices for effective governance
 - Provide opportunities for continuous learning and skill development relevant to the organization's needs
 - There are opportunities outside of the usual outlets
- Evaluation and Feedback
 - Regularly evaluate the effectiveness of board meetings through surveys, feedback forms, or discussions
 - Use feedback to identify areas for improvement and make adjustments to meeting processes or agendas as needed
- Cultivate a Positive Culture
 - Serve as a model of leadership and civility to the community
 - Foster a culture of trust, respect, and collaboration among board members
 - Celebrate achievements, acknowledge contributions, and address conflicts or concerns in a constructive manner to maintain a positive and productive atmosphere during meetings
 - Volunteer for as-needed committee work

Common Pitfalls of the Council/Manager Relationship

Mr. Geinzer stated he knows Council wants efficiency and productivity and a good relationship.

Mr. Geinzer stated uncertainty is not unhealthy for a relationship.

Mr. Geinzer discussed:

- Lack of Shared Expectation:
 - Issue: Driving blind, a manager might head in the opposite direction from the Council.
 - Tips: Set shared expectations out of the gate through a strategic framework or other similar strategy. Review annually at a minimum.
- Lack of Accountability and Communication around Accountability:
 - Issue: Related to “Shared Expectations” when we do not communicate progress, or address challenges, oftentimes assumptions get made.
 - Tips: Report out regularly. Address issues timely.
- Lack of Discipline/Strategic Focus:
 - Issue: Squirrels! Squirrels distract us from long-term goals and objectives. They slow Staff’s ability to complete projects in a timely manner.
 - Tips: Adopt a strategic framework or similar. Avoid pet projects/initiatives.
- Communication Inequity:
 - Issue: Perceptions of some councilmembers having more information than others.
 - Tips: Respond to/ask questions and copy all. Make the effort to connect, you cannot blame others or the Manager if you don’t.
- Disregard for Chain of Command:
 - Issue: Going around the city manager to direct staff and make/communicate administrative decisions without consulting the city manager.
 - Tips: Follow the Charter. General inquiries are ok but can be a slippery slope. Consult the manager.
- Disregard for Boundaries:
 - Issue: The manager, staff, and councilmembers are more than the job. They have lives. They have other responsibilities.
 - Tips: Take the time to communicate/learn boundaries. Respect boundaries. Define “real” emergencies.
- Leaving the Manager out in the Cold on Tough Decisions:
 - Issue: Getting thrown under the bus hurts.
 - Tips: Support the Manager when tough decisions must be made/implemented. Seek to understand. Empower manager to make and learn from mistakes.
- Apathy:
 - Issue: The manager is usually not in it for the glory but is also not just a tool to get the job done.
 - Tips: Remember the manager is human. Invest in the relationship. Show support.
- Empty Evaluations:
 - Issue: The evaluation plays a critical role in the Council/manager relationship. Too often they are a wasted opportunity.
 - Tips: Ensure structure. Invest. Keep it constructive. Evaluation should be two ways. Could work with a facilitator.

Strategic Framework

Mr. Geinzer stated the City’s draft strategic plan is focusing on the next two years.

Mr. Geinzer reviewed what a strategic framework is and why it is needed.

Mr. Geinzer discussed reacting is wasting time. A strategic framework helps prioritize initiatives and informed decision making.

Mr. Geinzer stated a strategic framework promotes transparency, accountability, and coordination. He said it helps allocate human and financial resources more effectively.

Mr. Geinzer stated a strategic framework fosters public trust and provides a pathway to cohesion. He said we can't be all things to all people. He said he doesn't know how you build cohesion without a plan.

ADJOURNMENT:

Councilmember Vilani moved to adjourn the Work Session until the conclusion of the City Council Special Meeting at 6:46 PM

Seconded by Councilmember Patterson

Ayes: Hennen, Patterson, Vilani, Baker, Black and Dean

Nays: None

Absent: Gavin

Motion Approved.

THE WORK SESSION OF THE FORTIETH COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF BERKLEY, MICHIGAN WAS CALLED BACK TO ORDER AT 7:15 PM ON WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 18, 2024 IN COUNCIL CHAMBERS BY MAYOR DEAN

PRESENT: Councilmember Steve Baker
Councilmember Clarence Black
Councilmember Dennis Hennen
Councilmember Gregory Patterson
Councilmember Jessica Vilani
Mayor Bridget Dean

ABSENT: Mayor Pro Tem Ross Gavin

OTHER STAFF PRESENT:

City Manager Crystal VanVleck
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Community Development Director Kristen Kapelanski
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Public Safety Director Matt Koehn
Interim Parks and Recreation Director Dan McMinn
Library Director Matt Church
Facilities Manager Alex Brown
Chief Innovation Officer Stan Lisica
Adam Wozniak, Superintendent of Public Works

Mr. Geinzer discussed:

- Two-year Strategic Framework
 - Simply: This is the time needed to get oriented and pull together the missing pieces
 - Time needed to prepare for larger strategic planning process and community conversations
- Strategic Framework Hierarchy
 - Strategic priority (owned by council, informed by staff)

- Objective (owned by council, informed by staff)
- Action Items (owned by staff, informed by council)

Ms. VanVleck described her strategic plan experience while in Oak Park.

Mr. Geinzer stated we want priorities and objectives to be locked in stone. The everyday needs need to be a little more fluid, but you will know what those are via quarterly updates. Ex. Long-term financial updates.

Mr. Geinzer stated collaboration and strategic planning serve as core drivers of equitable, efficient, and effective service delivery and policy development.

Mr. Geinzer discussed Organizational Effectiveness. Optimize organizational structure, staffing, policies/procedures, and level of service.

Mr. Geinzer reviewed some draft objectives of Organizational Effectiveness:

- Objective #1: Cultivate a strong organizational culture
 - Develop merit employee evaluation process
 - Investigate staff performance recognition strategies
- Objective #2: Optimize organization structure, staffing, policies/procedures, and level of service
 - Document Standard Operating Procedures across city operations
 - Implement recommendations of 2023 HR Assessment
- Objective #3: Foster stronger relationships with community and regional partners
 - Increase director/staff engagement with regional organizations
 - Promote regional networking amongst staff/peers
- Objective #4: Identify and implement innovative operational solutions
 - Prioritize document imaging
- Objective #5: Develop community strategic planning process
 - Outline community strategic planning process

Mr. Geinzer discussed Economic Sustainability. A vibrant Berkley embraces creative and innovative economic strategies that welcome and encourage commercial and residential diversity.

Mr. Geinzer reviewed some draft objectives of Economic Sustainability:

- Objective #1: Identify, prioritize, and deploy economic development tools
 - Complete economic development strategy per RRC
 - Bolster relationships with county and MEDC
- Objective #2: Identify development opportunities and focus areas
- Objective #3: Expand economic recruitment and retention efforts strengthening the City's economic portfolio
 - Complete marketing plan per RRC
 - Investigate/pursue P3
- Objective #4: Implement Master Plan updates and development process improvements
 - Finish Zoning Ordinance Update
 - Update Community Development Escrow Policy
- Object #5: Improve City/DDA strategic alignment
 - Everyone should be rowing in the same direction
 - Ensure DDA and city alignment through DDA strategic planning process
 - Review DDA staffing strategy

Mr. Geinzer discussed Community Assets. Recognizing the cumulative human, financial, and community costs of capital disinvestment, Berkley will develop a sustainable long-term capital investment strategy that bolsters quality of life.

Mr. Geinzer reviewed some draft objectives of Community Assets:

- Objective #1: Complete comprehensive asset needs inventory and management plan
- Objective #2: Develop a sustainable asset investment strategy that supports funding for the City's Capital Improvement plan
 - Update CIP Process and Plan Structure
 - Develop long-term capital plan
- Objective #3: Improve community resiliency
 - Update city engineering standards
- Objective #4: Improve facility/staff security and safety
 - Continue to evaluate and implement facility security/safety recommendations
 - Conduct regular safety training

Councilmember Baker asked that we also look at mental- and emotional-health training; suicide prevention.

Mr. Geinzer discussed Open Communications. The City of Berkley prioritizes authentic, transparent, frequent, and consistent internal and external communication strategies that foster confidence, awareness, pride, and community connection.

Mr. Geinzer reviewed some draft objectives of Open Communications:

- Objective #1 – Identify community audiences and most effective city “voice(s)”
 - Conduct community survey
 - Vary communication strategies by group
- Objective #2: identify and implement priority communication strategies within human and financial resources
 - Keep city staff informed about city initiatives
- Objective 3: Foster meaningful community engagement and genuine relationships
 - Support council outreach efforts
 - Reimagine and relaunch Citizens Academy

Mr. Geinzer discussed Fiscal Stewardship. Berkley is attentive to its fiscal realities, yet prioritizes value over cost, seeks to balance the delivery of community services and unfunded capital and financial liabilities through revenue diversity, operational efficiencies, and increasing private investment throughout the community.

Mr. Geinzer reviewed some draft objectives of Fiscal Stewardship:

- Objective #1: Clearly define and articulate the City's long-term fiscal realities
 - Develop a multi-year forecast
 - Identify and implement improved budget communication strategy
- Objective #2: Identify additional funding strategies and partnerships
 - Comprehensive review and update the city fee schedule
 - Identify/engage grant support /resources
- Objective #3: Investigate new shared service opportunities
- Objective #4: Develop a strategy to address the City's unfunded liabilities in a fiscally balanced manner
- Objective #5: Update financial policies/procedures
 - Update Procurement Policy
 - Streamline accounts payable process through BS&A

Mr. Geinzer reviewed Accountability & Next Steps:

- Strategic Framework Buildout:

- Continue Staff Review of Action Items
 - Study “achieveability” of action item list ensuring space for unforeseen needs (current draft 71 items)
 - Prioritize Action Items
 - Assign/Map out item timelines to manage staff capacity and expectations
- Build Out Quarterly Reporting Tool
 - Develop streamlined and digestible format
 - Define understandable progress levels
 - Communicate barriers
 - Assign KPIs where appropriate
- Accountability:
 - City Manager/Staff
 - Communicate quarterly progress
 - Integrate strategic framework into capital improvement and budget processes
 - Utilize framework in staff evaluation process
 - Communicate barriers
 - Review with council annually prior to the annual budget process. Optimize the consent agenda to use regular agenda to discuss items like updates, progress, etc.

A discussion took place about future strategic planning sessions, focus on telling the stories of Berkley, and productive updates from Staff to Council. Less is more. Council discussed stating what is really going on when discussing the budget.

Further discussion took place that information is only as valuable as the ability to act on it. Information has to be actionable.

Mr. Geinzer said what we are talking about is more of a spreadsheet.

City Manager VanVleck agreed information to Council should be kept succinct, but have the weeds there if they want it.

- City Council
 - Adopt strategic framework, stick to the framework (alterations require review and framework amendment, not simply adding to the list)
 - Utilize framework in the city manager evaluation process
 - Review with Council annually (at minimum) prior to the annual budget process

Discussion took place on when/how often a review of the strategic plan should take place. Mr. Geinzer offered some suggestions. They discussed how the strategic plan will provide more context for the budgeting process.

Mr. Geinzer reviewed the next steps in the strategic planning process. Steps include:

- Community Survey – statistically sound
- SWOT analysis: An assessment of the organization’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats
- Scope/Situational Review: An analysis of the organization’s current state
- Vision and Mission: A statement of the organization’s purpose and aspirations, and its reason for existence
- Goals and Objectives: Broad, long-term goals, and specific, measurable actions to support them
- Strategies: Detailed plans for achieving objectives
- Action Plans: Specific steps, timelines, and responsibilities for implementing strategies
- Resource Allocation: Identification and distribution of necessary resources
- Monitoring and Evaluation: Methods for tracking progress and measuring success

Mr. Geinzer concluded the meeting by reviewing the Fundamentals of Strategic Planning Process & Plan:

- Statistically significant community survey
- Extensive community engagement
- Needs vs. wants vs. resources
- Usually five-year timeline
- Usually 12 months+ process
- Annual review

Mr. Geinzer stated this would be like a master plan initiative.

Mr. Geinzer asked council members how they feel about bringing the Strategic Plan before them in January. He stated it would be a plan at the higher level and would not include the tasks. He stated Council will know all of the tasks and they will be included in the first quarterly report.

Mr. Geinzer stated he and City Manager VanVleck have to talk about capacity. He said they want to set Staff up for success and not failure.

Further discussion took place about the excitement and benefits of a strategic plan.

Mayor Dean thanked Mr. Geinzer and said Council's job is not to micromanage. Same team, same goals.

ADJOURNMENT:

Councilmember Vilani moved to adjourn the Work Session at 7:54 PM

Seconded by Councilmember Patterson

Ayes: Patterson, Vilani, Baker, Black, Hennen and Dean

Nays: None

Absent: Gavin

Motion Approved.

Bridget Dean, Mayor

ATTEST:

Victoria Mitchell, City Clerk